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## Maine Women's Insider (April 2006)

Maine Women's Lobby Staff

*Maine Women's Lobby*

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# INSIDER

www.mainewomen.org

A publication of  
the Maine Women's Lobby and the Maine Women's Policy Center

Dear Friends,

Thanks to your support, it's been an incredible season for the Maine Women's Lobby and the Maine Women's Policy Center. Welcome to our first in a series of bi-monthly updates to our strongest supporters to share

the very latest news, provide insights into our successes and our challenges, and introduce you to the stories of advocates who are making a difference in public policy today.

With the legislative session nearly over, the **Maine Women's Lobby** is celebrating our success and gearing up for the final push to enact legislation that will improve the lives of women and girls.

With the hard work and dedication of our Director of Public Affairs, **Lauralee Raymond**, this year we helped to pass an increase in the minimum wage to \$7.00 over two years, created a task force to address violence

in the workplace, and enabled low-income people to access financial support in times of crisis. Look for a complete wrap-up in our forthcoming summer newsletter.

But we have much more yet to do. At the time of this writing, a critical violence prevention bill is stalled because of a cynical attempt by the National Rifle Association (NRA) to attach unrelated gun protection amendments. Women's lives are on the line, so the passage of this bill is our highest priority.

Meanwhile, the Maine Women's Policy Center is gearing up for a summer of intense election year activity. You'll be hearing from us soon with news of how to get involved! We couldn't make these gains without your financial contributions and gifts of time and energy. **Thank you for all you do.**

*Sarah Standiford,*  
Executive Director



Executive Director Sarah Standiford enjoys a light moment during a widely attended debate against national conservative pundit, Christina Hoff Sommers



Board member Kimm Collins addresses Girls' Day participants in a mock public hearing



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# Organizer Takes it to the Streets

## Fair Courts Campaign Mobilizes Members

by Cara Bilodeau

It's been about a year since I became the Community Organizer with the Maine Women's Policy Center and the Maine Women's Lobby - and what a year! My first task was to engage other organizations and activists in what would shape up as the most impressive Supreme Court battle that people of my generation will remember.

I'm sure you remember the chain of events that took place last summer. **Judge John Roberts** was nominated to replace **Justice Sandra Day O'Connor**, then **Chief Justice Rehnquist** passed away, then Judge Roberts was nominated to replace Rehnquist, then **Harriet Miers** came along, then disappeared, and finally President Bush nominated **Judge Samuel Alito**.

Samuel Alito was confirmed to the Supreme Court, but it was not because of lack of determination on our part. Our 40-member Fair and Independent Courts Coalition grew bigger and stronger. We engaged 900 new activists. Do you remember that Saturday afternoon in January when we experienced hurricane-like weather? That is the day we held our rally against the confirmation of Alito. To my amazement, 100 activists came with their signs and their umbrellas to show our Senators just how committed they were.



Activists protest the Alito nomination during the Rolling Justice tour



'Checks and Balanz' visit Portland to raise awareness about Supreme Court nominations

we organized a town hall meeting in Lewiston to give community members a chance to speak and ask questions of the Senators. Unfortunately, **Senator Susan Collins** did not send a representative to the meeting, but **Senator Olympia Snowe** did, and she was welcomed by a room of nearly 60 activists who wanted their questions answered. I was inspired by what they had to say about the importance of the Supreme Court to women's health, safety, economic security and opportunity. We may have lost the fight against the Supreme Court this time, but I believe we demonstrated that Maine people care about the future of the Courts.

# Rejecting the Choice between a Child and a Paycheck

## One Advocate Promotes the Family Care Act

by Christina Griffin

I am a 29-year-old mother, student, and full-time worker who lives in Portland with my husband and two young children. I testified in support of L.D. 1044, *An Act to Care for Families*, because I know that I am not the only mother who has needed to use my own sick time to care for an ill child.

Like many young children, my son Jacob suffered from ear infections. One day, while working at a local furniture store, I got a call from his day care.

He was running a fever and needed to be picked up. But I couldn't go because I had already been threatened for previously using my own earned sick time to pick up a sick child. So my husband picked up Jacob and brought him to the restaurant where he worked. He couldn't take the day off either, so he made Jacob as comfortable as possible in a restaurant booth. By the time I arrived, my son was running a fever of 102 and had to go the emergency room.

I know I'm not the only woman who has been faced with this dilemma that comes when our workplaces lack this basic flexibility. I simply had an impossible choice. That's why I supported the Family Care Act and was proud to see it take effect last September!

### The Family Care Act

applies to businesses with 25 or more employees. An employee may now use up to 40 hours of already accrued sick or vacation time to care for an ill child, parent, or spouse.

# Girls "Rock the House" on Tenth Annual Girls' Day

This year's **Girls' Day at the State House** was a tremendous success thanks in part to support from the **William and Joan Alfond**

**Foundation**, the **Margaret Chase Smith Library**, and **Cole Haan**. The Maine Women's Policy Center brought 102 8th graders from 50 schools to the State House for a day of hands-on learning. As one student said, "I learned that girls and women can make a difference in their town, school, nation, or world."



Girls' Day participants, role playing as reporters, ask questions of mock press conference participants while a real local news channel looks on